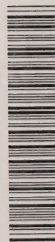


IRB DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

WHAT IT IS AND HOW IT WORKS

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Immigration and
Refugee Board

La Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié

Canada



The Nansen Medal

INTRODUCTION

Since the Second World War, Canada has provided a new homeland for more than half a million men, women and children fleeing from fear and persecution in their own countries. In 1986, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees presented the Nansen Medal to the people of Canada in recognition of this country's outstanding efforts on behalf of refugees. This was the first time in the more than 40-year history of the Medal that it had ever been awarded to an entire nation.

Canada's reputation for accepting refugees led to unprecedented numbers of refugee claimants seeking entry into Canada in the last half of the 1980s. By 1988, it was clear the system could no longer cope with the influx of claimants. As a result, the federal government changed the refugee determination system, making it the responsibility of a new tribunal, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. These changes were made to improve the

efficiency of the process while maintaining Canada's traditional values of fairness and compassion for those seeking Canada's protection.

For such a process to function effectively, the Immigration and Refugee Board requires information that is both timely and accurate on the countries from which refugee claimants are fleeing. To provide this information is the role of the Board's Documentation Centre. The holdings of the Documentation Centre are important to the work of the Board and those concerned with refugee, human rights and migration issues in Canada and around the world.

This brochure explains the various functions of the Documentation Centre and how people may gain access to its services.

R.G.L. Fairweather
Chairman
Immigration and Refugee Board

A NEW BEGINNING...
A story to be continued...

MANDATE

The Documentation Centre is the principal resource in Canada for credible and trustworthy information essential to the effective functioning of Canada's refugee determination system. It was established in 1988 in the belief that reliable information, both of the claimant's country of origin and of pertinent law, was essential to help members render fair decisions through the determination process.

The Documentation Centre holdings cover a broad range of topics including the human rights situation in various parts of the world and data on specific religious, political or ethnic groups – information of both a general and historical nature. In addition, the Documentation Centre is a major repository of material relating to the interpretation and application of Canada's Immigration Act, as it has been revised.

An important aspect of its role is to actively encourage and participate in the exchange of information with human rights groups, refugee organizations and documentation centres nationally and internationally. In this regard, the Documentation Centre ensures that the formats necessary for such exchanges comply with those already established as international standards.

The Documentation Centre acts as a focal point for information dissemination and referral on a broad range of migration-related issues. It also serves as a public affairs and education resource on refugees, human rights and migration matters.



OUTSIDERS VIEW:
fine refugee policy

WHO WE SERVE

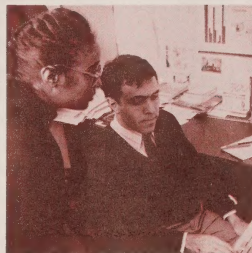
The Documentation Centre was established to meet the information needs of the Convention Refugee Determination Division (CRDD) and the Immigration Appeal Division (IAD) of the Immigration and Refugee Board.

Information is provided on an active and regular basis to all those involved in the refugee determination process including case presenting officers, refugee hearing officers, Immigration and Refugee Board members, advocates and claimants.

The Documentation Centre responds to queries on refugee matters from other interested parties such as legislators, non-governmental organizations and the academic community.

While the Documentation Centre's first responsibility is to serve those within the determination process, all of its resources are open and accessible to the public.

The Centre is also active as part of the international effort to collect and disseminate information on conditions affecting refugees as well as national jurisprudence on refugee matters. To this end, the Centre works in cooperation with other national and international agencies including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



NEW HEARING SYSTEM FINDING REAL REFUGEES.

WHAT WE DO

In addition to acquiring and disseminating material from a variety of sources, Documentation Centre staff undertake research and analysis to produce objective and reliable documentation relating to the refugee determination process. On a continuous basis, researchers compile and update material relating to the conditions in countries of origin of refugee claimants to Canada.

The ongoing exchange of information with other Documentation Centres engaged in similar work both at home and abroad is a vital aspect of the Centre's activities. This exchange helps the Centre meet its commitment to acquire the most credible and current information sources to develop its own holdings. All information used and distributed by the Centre comes from publicly available and verifiable sources.

The Documentation Centre acquires information from a wide range of sources including Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the Minority Rights Group,

Human Rights Watch, the United Nations and online news services. This information is the basis for the development of Country Profiles on countries producing refugee claimants. Complementing these holdings is a growing collection of analyses by Canadian individuals and groups which, given patterns of arrival or other links, focus on countries of specific interest to Canada.

The Centre makes full use of the latest information technology to allow for the comprehensive collection of material, rapid online searches, prompt analysis and evaluation and effective distribution. It has adopted international standards on terminology and formatting enabling the rapid exchange of information with external data bases. The Centre's automated system is capable of supplying information in two broad categories: country of origin/human rights material and legal information.



REFUGEES GAMBLE
on Canadian future



To this end, the Documentation Centre has developed three databases:

- REFBIB contains bibliographic entries and abstracts of the Centre's holdings;
- REFDEC includes the full text of a selection of decisions made by the Immigration and Refugee Board;
- REFINFO contains the text of requests for information received from participants in the refugee determination system, including lawyers and claimants, followed by the IRBDC's responses and details of relevant sources.

A fourth database, REFLAP, will focus on information concerning law and practice in the countries of origin of refugee claimants, as well as countries of asylum and transit. This data will help researchers obtain information on a particular country's laws, and how these laws and regulations are applied in practice, particularly on questions of admission, transit, residence, departure and return. In this regard, the full text and relevant commentaries on treaties and covenants specific to human rights and refugees will be collected, as well as

significant examples of foreign applications of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

In the interests of providing a comprehensive range of information, the Centre issues a compendium of media accounts on situations in countries of immediate concern to Canadian decision makers and on countries identified as potential future sources of refugee claimants. The Centre publishes Issue Papers which provide updated information on situation and policy changes in claimant-producing countries; these complement the regularly published Country Profiles. In addition, another compendium containing responses to information requests on a variety of refugee-related topics, is produced weekly.

The Centre co-ordinates and videotapes a speakers' forum, *Perspectives*, to provide current information on country-specific situations to decision makers and the community at large. Participants in these fora include refugees, human rights workers, academics and specialists on refugee issues.

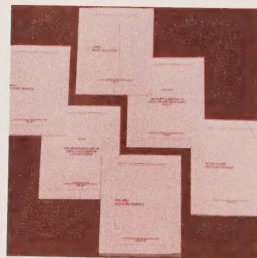
THE COUNTRY PROFILE

Comprehensive, current, objective and trustworthy documentation is the foundation upon which fair decisions are made. To this end, country of origin and human rights information are assessed and evaluated to form the basis of the Country Profile which is the Centre's primary report to Board members and others involved in refugee determination.

The Country Profile documents the geographic, historic, political and social dimensions of the country of origin of refugee claimants. Most importantly, the Country Profile provides a comprehensive report on the human rights situation as recorded by trustworthy monitors and observers, both domestic and international. The contents of a Country Profile include:

Maps: outlining traditional exit and migration routes, refugee camps, resettlement areas, areas of insurgent and counterinsurgent activities, detention centres and areas of civil or ethnic strife.

General Information and Introduction: placing the country in its general regional and geopolitical context with emphasis upon those factors unique to the country and relating to the exodus of people from it.



Road to refuge
began with
jail,
torture,
death threats.



Human Rights Issues: taking the definition of a Convention refugee as a guide, compares individual and collective rights guaranteed in the country's constitution with what occurs in practice, placing special emphasis upon freedom of association and expression, disappearances and extra-judicial killings, legal rights, torture, freedom of religion, indigenous people and ethnic groups, other vulnerable groups, and economic rights.

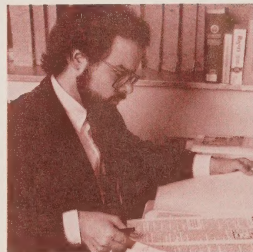
Issues in Brief: summarizing the major human rights issues with special emphasis on the current situation and, where possible, an assessment of what the future might bring.

Exit and Return: focussing on the right of individuals to leave and to return to their country, including penalties for illegal departure or the return of persons who have claimed refugee status abroad.

Political Parties and Movements: providing information on the structure, mandate, ideology and strengths of the various political parties as well as the relationships between political parties, including legal restrictions on the formation of parties.

Chronology of Major Events: outlining the relevant sequence of events leading to the current situation in the country.

Annotated Bibliography and Notes: providing an abstract of the major sources used in the compilation of the country profile.



Defectors tell of "horrifying" escape voyage.

ACCESS

The information services of the Documentation Centre include searches, retrievals, loans and consultations. However, while its holdings are available for public reference, the Centre is not a general library; it is a highly specialized information resource on refugees. In keeping with its mandate, Centre staff give priority to requests for information directly related to the refugee determination process.

Country profiles and other materials are available to the public for reference at the IRB's national headquarters in Ottawa and through the regional documentation centres. Centre staff will respond to written requests for information as quickly as other priorities allow.

The Centre is also interested in receiving information from individuals or groups who have country of origin material that would be of relevance in the refugee determination process. Such information exchange and networking within Canada and abroad enable the Centre to meet its commitment to provide high quality, current and objective information to those involved in the refugee determination process and the general public.



Refugees: a barometer of genocide

**DOCUMENTATION
CENTRES ARE
LOCATED IN
EACH OF THE
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Ottawa, Ontario
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Third Floor
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 3J1
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Fax: (204) 983-8525

Montreal

200 René-Lévesque Boulevard West
East Tower, Room 102
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H2Z 1X4
Tel.: (514) 283-7733
Fax: (514) 496-1709

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Natural Resources Building
205-9th Avenue South East
9th Floor
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Fax: (403) 292-6131

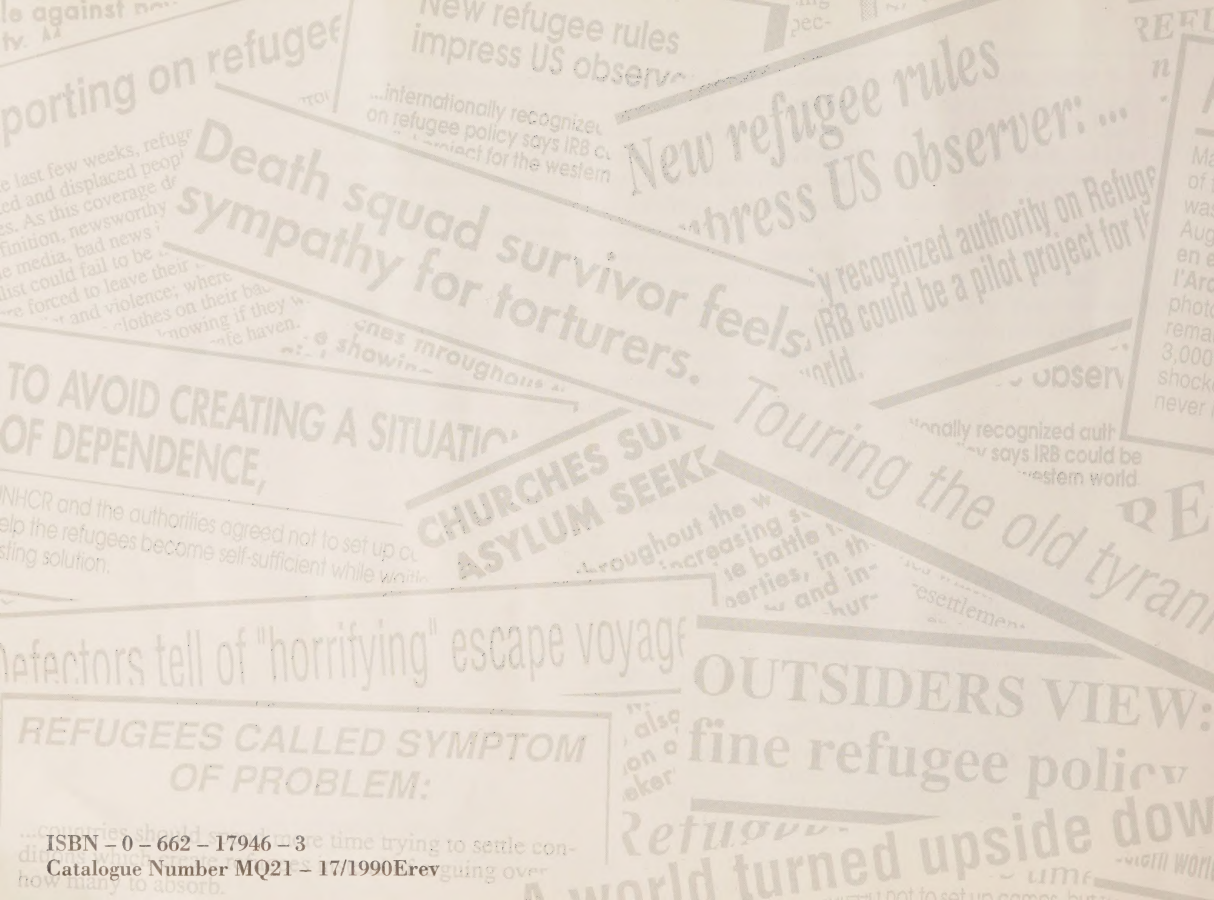
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Vancouver, British Columbia
V6Z 2J9
Tel.: (604) 666-5945
Fax: (604) 666-7370

(Publié également en français)



...against...
...reporting on refugees...

New refugee rules
impress US observer

New refugee rules
impress US observer: ...

Death squad survivor feels
sympathy for torturers.

TO AVOID CREATING A SITUATION
OF DEPENDENCE,

NHCR and the authorities agreed not to set up camps
help the refugees become self-sufficient while waiting
for a solution.

CHURCHES SEEK
ASYLUM SEEKERS

Touring the old tyrann

Refugees tell of "horrifying" escape voyage

REFUGEES CALLED SYMPTOM
OF PROBLEM:

OUTSIDERS VIEW:
fine refugee policy

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Refugees
world turned upside down